

Richard Watson Gilder House  
Bordentown, Burlington County, New Jersey

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Seymour Williams, A.I.A., District Officer  
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

Richard Watson Gilder House  
Bordentown, Burlington County, New Jersey

Owner: City of Bordentown

Date of Erection: About 1788

Architect:

Builder: Samuel Rogers (Probable)

Present Condition: Good

Number of Stories: Two and a half main unit;  
two stories wing

Materials of Construction: Foundation - stone

Exterior walls - frame  
construction, siding

Interior walls - plaster

Inside brick chimneys

Roof - pitch, dormer on  
main section recent

Historical Data:

In March 1788 Joseph Borden and his wife conveyed the tract of land upon which this house now stands to Samuel Rogers. Maria H. Lansdale in The Century Magazine for March, 1911 states that the house was built about 1788. It would seem from this that the builder was Samuel Rogers.

In 1794 by deed between Samuel Rogers and Stephen Sayre, part of the property was taken away and at the same time a larger addition was made. The executives of Samuel Rogers, Isaac Thorne and Azariah Hunt, sold the property to Thomas Nutt in February, 1814. Thomas Nutt by will in 1819 left the property to his wife Lydia. Lydia and her daughter Maria H. Nutt left a will dated 1802. In this will the property was given to "my nephew Richard Watson Gilder to my neice Jeanette L. Gilder to nephew Joseph B. Gilder." Jeanette Gilder and Joseph and his wife conveyed all their rights in the property to Richard Watson Gilder by deed in 1895. The property was added to by Lydia Nutt in July, 1839 by purchase from Joseph Hopkinson.

William Watson Gilder, editor and poet, was born in "Belle Vue" Bordentown, New Jersey, February 8, 1844. His ancestors on his father's side came to America from Kent by the way of the Barbadoes settling in Delaware; his great grandfather was a farmer in Delaware. His grandfather was a "measurer" in Philadelphia and Chairman of the Board of Builders of Girard College. His father, William Henry Gilder, was a Methodist minister who at the birth of Richard Watson was conducting the Belle Vue Female Seminary at Bordentown. His mother was Jane Nutt, a descendant of a long line of the New Jersey farmers and a daughter of a major in the War of 1812. His paternal grandmother Sara Leonard was of French Huguenot extraction.

Richard spent his early years and the years during the Civil War in Bordentown; all through his life he made many visits to the home of his birth. His father sold the school at Bordentown in 1848 and bought another on Long Island. It is here that Richard, the only boy in a female seminary, received his first education. The school was unsuccessful and his father went back to preaching for a time. The opening of the Civil War found his father conducting another school at Yonkers, New York. Reverend Gilder became the chaplain of the 40th New York Regiment.

The family came back to Bordentown. Richard belonged to the Anderson Cadet Corp at Bordentown. He, also, for a short time read law in the office of John E. Bullitt. In 1863 at the age of nineteen he got his mother's permission and enlisted for a period of emergency in the first Philadelphia Artillery and saw service for about five weeks.

After his father's death in 1864 Richard became paymaster for the Camden and Amboy Railroad. Then he became the local and legislative reporter for the Newark Daily Advertiser. He finally became managing editor of this paper. He wrote for Hours at Home and for a short time during 1869-1870 edited this magazine in New York. In the latter year Hours at Home was merged with the newly founded Scribner's Monthly. Gilder was the assistant editor of the magazine.

He married in 1874 Helena de Kay, a granddaughter of Joseph Rodman Drake and a daughter of Commodore de Kay.

From the time of his association with Scribner's Gilder lived most of his life in New York. When Scribner's Monthly ended in 1881 and The Century came into existence, Gilder was named editor, and until 1909 when he died he remained editor of that magazine. He wrote much verse and considerable prose and is important mainly as the editor of a great literary magazine.

Richard Watson Gilder by deed dated 1902 gave the property and estate known as "Belle Vue" to his son Rodman de Kay Gilder. In November 1935 Mr. Gilder presented the property with the tract of land about thirteen acres to the City of Bordentown.

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Search of Burlington County Court Records  
by Betty R. Bishop



Supervising Historian

Approved:



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